

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR TO THE READER

From the Middle

Alfredo Cramerotti, Editor, 'Critical Photography' series

Learning by doing, they say. Yes, but I learn a great deal also by thinking over and forming in my head the very idea of doing. I constantly negotiate what I have preconceived and what I actually do and consequently learn from both processes and the discrepancy between them. This is precisely what *Contingency in Madagascar* attempts to reveal to the reader. It is not a matter of exotic imagery or travel photography, but something else altogether.

By implying that I am always implicated in what I do, no matter how hard I try to detach myself, neutralise my gaze, make myself invisible, this book places its authors, readers and myself, as editor, in the middle of a life drift: that is, the images capture the past and the future, in the present – less a case of trying to understand things from the beginning or anticipating a possible future from which to work things out retrospectively, more about placing ourselves in the middle of the stories and going with the flow, in one direction and then another, like life. Despite my best efforts to plan my existence, I know I will never succeed; any attempt to plot life will always be foiled by fate.

In fact, the best way to explore an idea is to run alongside, rather than to take a snapshot, which often freezes and stultifies instead of offering an ongoing experience. As a medium, photography, at its best, is capable of reflecting on itself; not many activities and practices can do it. Sometimes I do not have enough information to gauge a situation or a potential narrative, so my cultural background makes up the missing connections. In this way, I can share with the readers the responsibility and the weight of that space/time situation to hold and evaluate, for a while. And little matters if I find the image equivocal; it is life itself and the reality in which it is lived that are just as equivocal. Learning by doing, they say. And sharing all the incongruities along the way.

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